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AN
ADDRESS
TO
HYDROPIc PATIENTS,
&c. &c.

—
By W. LUXMOORE,
SURGEON, OF UXBRIDGE, MIDDLESEX.

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PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

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TO
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WHEREIN
THE PRINCIPLES OF A METHOD OF PRACTICE
ADOPTED BY THE AUTHOR, IN
THE TREATMENT OF
DROPSY,
ARE EXPLAINED;
AND TO WHICH SOME CASES ARE ANNEXED.

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1796.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE object of these sheets being intended merely to explain *the principles* of a method of practice the author has successfully pursued for upwards of twenty years in the treatment of Dropsy; and having addressed them to the notice and attention of Hydropic Patients, he thinks it unnecessary to enter further into the various distinctions of that disease than just to point out the different

species, so far as relates to the plan alluded to.

With respect to the Hydrocephalus, Hydrocele, and encysted Dropsy, as nothing in this concise work, which is submitted with diffidence to the public, is meant to convey the most remote idea of their being considered as relievable by it, *except the Ovarium Dropsy*, he shall of course only include the Ascites, Anasarca, Hydrothorax, and Ovarium Dropsy; neither will he enter into any other disquisition on the causes of them, nor make any further observations on the Exhalants and Lymphatics than what are perfectly conformable to it; the almost uniform unsuccessful practice, therefore, which the author had observed to have been adopted by

the most eminent of the Faculty, at a very early period of his introduction into the medical line, and which seems still to be pursued with very little deviation, excited him to consider it of the utmost importance to exert his feeble efforts to attempt at relieving a disorder, that by the usual course of practice, especially in long existing cases, and consequently greatly debilitated habits, evidently tended to aggravate the disease it meant to cure; and the Patients who have fallen to his lot having been such whose cases had baffled the skill of the Faculty in general, and been abandoned by them, *especially Dropsies of the Ovarium.* The Author flatters himself that the cases annexed will exempt him from the imputa-

tion of presumption, as a practice, founded on rational principles, and confirmed by facts, cannot fail to have its due effect on every candid mind.

The Author cannot conclude this introduction without intimating, that it is at the earnest desire of many Hydropic Patients, as well as others, that he submits the present limited observations to public attention ; both to remove the unfavourable impression that his treatment of Dropsies depends on a *specific*, or what is vulgarly termed a *nostrum*, and likewise to obviate that idea ; at the same time, he takes the opportunity to express his alacrity to diffuse and communicate his method of practice in the

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most public and explicit manner; so
that every practitioner may be com-
petent to apply the various remedies,
whenever a moderate, permanent
compensation shall be offered.

UXBRIDGE, JULY 18, 1796.

(1)

DEFINITION

or

DROPSY.

DROPSY is a morbid accumulation of water in any cavity of the body, and is distinguished according to the different cavities it occupies: Thus, when contained within the cellular membrane, it is termed *Anasarca*; when within the cavity of the abdomen, or *belly*, *Afcites*; in that of the thorax, or *chest* (in which I would likewise include a collection in the pericardium, or bag, wherein

the heart is contained), Hydrothorax. But though the symptoms of the Anasarca and Ascites have been accurately described by almost every author who has either professedly written on the treatment of Dropsy, or on the general practice of physic; yet even under these circumstances it will be perfectly consistent to repeat them on the present occasion, as well as to describe the Hydrothorax and Ovarium Dropsy, which have been rather passed over without that minute attention they so seriously demand.

The ANASARCA generally appears first in the feet about the ancles, which towards evening are observed to be swelled, especially if any extraordinary exertions have been un-

dergone ; and in the early stage of
 the disease subside during the night,
 and in the morning disappear. After
 having continued in this manner some
 time, when the hydropic symptoms
 are thus removed from the feet du-
 ring the night, they appear in the
 face, which is puffed in the morn-
 ing, particularly the eye-lids, and
 about the neck, or in either hand,
 upon which the Patient may have ac-
 cidentally rested. As the disease en-
 creases, the swelling of the feet as-
 cends to the legs, thighs, and by de-
 grees the body, scrotum, and penis
 become affected ; and in women, the
 labia pudenda ; attended with pallid
 countenance, deficiency of urine,
 which is generally very turbid, dif-
 ficulty of breathing, thirst, loss of
 appetite, &c.

The ASCITES, or Dropsy of the Belly, generally begins with lassitude, languor, and great aversion to exercise. The Patient passes very little water, which is thick and lateritious, or of a brick-dust like colour; the pulse is generally small and quick, the belly swells, and a fluctuation of fluid may be easily perceived by placing one hand on one side of it, and striking with the other; the breathing becomes difficult, attended with dry hectic cough, costiveness, loss of appetite, and slight degree of fever; in proportion as the belly swells, the superior parts of the body waste away; the pulse is weak, but rather hard and tense; and when the accumulation is considerable, the respiration becomes so oppressed in an horizontal posture, that the Patient

cannot sleep, except almost erect; it is generally accompanied with anasar-
cous swellings of the lower extremi-
ties, and frequently with those of the
scrotum, penis, and labia pudenda.

In most cases of HYDROTHORAX,
or Dropsy of the Chest, there is a
tendency to Anasarca in the whole
system, and particularly to œdema-
tous swellings of the legs and feet,
and often in the hand and arm cor-
responding to the side where the ef-
fusion is; and sometimes there is a
kind of torpor and paralytic affection
of those parts; if the effusion is only
on one side, the Patient is more easy
in laying on that side. It is generally
attended with more or less of dry
cough, difficulty and shortness of
breathing, darting pains through the

chest, pains in the arms, intermitting pulse, and where the effusion is considerable, the Patient can breath only in an erect posture, or stooping forward ; there is another symptom also which I have often observed to attend the Hydrothorax, which is a paroxysm that attacks the Patient three or four hours after he has been in bed, when he is awaked from a sound sleep with such a sense of suffocation as obliges him suddenly to start up ; this paroxysm will sometimes continue for hours, at other times, it will go off in half an hour.

DROPSY of the **OVARIUM** is a disease peculiar only to females, and from which no age (from 15 to 70) or constitution is exempt ; it generally comes on without the least previous

indisposition in the habit (which particularly characterizes the Ovarium Dropsy, and distinguishes it from the Ascites), the Patient enjoying, in other respects, the most perfect health, especially in the early periods of life, without any interruption to the usual evacuations; at first a slight foreness to the touch on pressure, accompanied with slight transient obtuse pains, and slight burning sensations are felt in the part affected;* after some time she perceives the part to become enlarged; in this almost insensible manner it proceeds, until the Patient is alarmed by pains on the inside of the

* In one or both sides of the inferior part of the belly, from about three inches below the navel, *obliquely*, between that and the groin, or what is technically termed *hypogastrium*.

thighs, resembling those which attend menstruation, a numbness and anasarcaous swelling of the leg and thigh of the affected side; the general habit becomes more diseased; the part affected is enlarged, with such a circumscribed fluctuation, as leaves no doubt of the nature of the disease.

To convey, however, a distinct and satisfactory idea how these accumulations are produced, from whatever cause Dropsy may arise, it will be necessary to observe, that in every cavity of the body there are two distinct classes of vessels, one denominated exhalants, to secrete or separate an aqueous fluid from the blood, to keep the surfaces moist, and the other absorbents, or lymphatics, to absorb this fluid, and return it into the

circulation, to be carried off by the various emunctories. If, therefore, the exhalants become relaxed, and consequently secrete too large quantities of this aqueous fluid, or the functions of the absorbents impaired, Dropsy must ensue, *viz.* either from encreased secretion, or diminished absorption.

As it is evident, therefore, that in almost every species of Dropsy, either partial, or general debility, prevails; it must appear obvious, that the too prevailing practice of attempting to cure this melancholy disorder by remedies which tend to encrease that debility, must defeat its own object, as daily experience and observation evince; for though a few doses of brisk purging physic, an active eme-

tic, or a powerful sudorific, may accidentally, *perhaps*, remove that kind of Dropsy which attacks persons of robust habits, the consequence of sudden check of perspiration, or some other accidental cause; yet in cases of long existing debility, accompanied frequently with diseased viscera,* medicines of the class above mentioned must have the most pernicious effects; neither can the most powerful diuretics, unassisted by other apposite auxiliary remedies, *particularly under such circumstances*, be successfully administered. Wherefore, as I address this to Hydropic Patients, I must

* By viscera is implied the contents of the belly and chest.

earnestly recommend a steady, regular, perseverance in medicine, and due attention to regimen; as a cure or even material relief is very rarely affected by any sudden or copious evacuation, even by the kidneys; for as no specific can possibly exist for the cure of any disease that depends on a variety of causes, it is evident that a variation in the remedies, according to cases, constitutions, and circumstances, become absolutely necessary. And although the Anasarca, Ascites, and Hydrothorax may be sometimes relieved, and even cured by nearly a similar treatment, yet the Ovarium Dropsy being *encysted*, will be found to require a considerable deviation from the general mode, though on similar principles, viz. to restore

the tone of the exhalants and lymphatics, and at the same time evacuate the extravasated fluids; for unless these objects can be attained, such regular secretions and excretions cannot possibly ensue, as will afford permanent relief in any species of Dropsy. On these principles then, that practice is founded which the Author has so successfully adopted; and as the remedies he administers neither require confinement, nor very rarely excite the least derangement in the habit; no unfavourable apprehensions can, with propriety, be entertained from a mode of practice, both benign in itself, and admitting (without diminishing its efficacy) of such variations, as circumstances, and the urgency of particular symptoms may indicate;

at the same time, he begs leave to observe, that no *sudden* effects, or *copious* evacuations are to be expected from them.

CASES.

MR. S. aged about *fifty*, had been some months affected with Anasarca and Ascites, loss of appetite, thirst, great weakness, &c. ; after having ineffectually pursued several prescriptions, by the advice of a physician, he applied for my assistance and was effectually cured.

A labouring man, aged about *forty*, had several years been afflicted with difficulty and shortness of breathing, and

dry cough ; but these complaints having considerably encreased, attended with darting pains through the chest, pains in the arms, and entire inability to breath, except his body was either erect or stooping forward ; his face and lips, from the excessive difficulty of respiration, appeared as if stained with the juice of black cherries ; severe pains and throbbing in the head, accompanied with considerable swelling, and universal Anasarca, strong, full, intermittent pulse, insatiable thirst, and violent cough ; the urine in very small quantity, and that of the usual high, lateritious colour : in this situation I was desired to visit him, and in a few weeks every dropfical appearance disappeared, and the breathing and cough were restored to their usual state, so that he pursued his employment.

W. B. a gardener, aged about *seventy*, of a very corpulent habit, after having had a severe cough and loss of appetite some time, was attacked with darting pains through the chest, pains in the arms, great difficulty and shortness of breathing, being unable to rest unless his body was in a very elevated posture; accompanied likewise with Anasarca and Ascites, and such extreme weakness, that he could not walk without assistance—was perfectly cured.

Mr. H. aged *fifty*, of a spare, bilious habit, but very active, and accustomed to a great deal of horse exercise, had been several years afflicted with Ascites and Anasarca, attended with severe pains in the belly and loins, insatiable thirst, loss of appetite, great weakness, &c. for which he had taken medicine ineffectually, had been three times tapped, and

the two last operations performed within a month of each other, was perfectly cured.

A boy, aged about *fifteen*, was a few days after an extraordinary exertion in walking, attacked with excessive difficulty and shortness of breathing, violent cough, severe darting pains through the chest, and pains in the arms, insatiable thirst, strong palpitation of the heart, a full, quick, vibrating, intermittent pulse, could not breath, except with his body erect or stooping forward, a rapid accumulation of fluid in the belly, and universal Anasarca—he was perfectly cured.

A boy, aged about *sixteen*, of a very delicate constitution, after having been several years afflicted with great difficulty and shortness of breathing, and every

other concomitant symptom of Hydrothorax, or Dropsy on the Chest; an Ascites became evident, and rapidly increased, with the most excruciating pains in the belly, attended with almost constant sensation of the undulation of water, and accompanied likewise with extreme weakness—was perfectly cured.

A young gentleman, aged about *twelve*, who had long been afflicted with Ascites, attended with severe pains in the belly, and great weakness, for which he had taken medicines, by the repeated advice of a physician, but every remedy having proved abortive, and being reduced almost to a skeleton, I was desired to visit him, and he was perfectly cured.

A child, aged about two years, after having been ill some time with severe

pains in the belly, accompanied with bilious countenance, and general wasting, considerable enlargement of the belly became evident, which rapidly increased, with a sensible fluctuation; but the mother suspecting worms to be the cause, neglected to apply for medical assistance till these appearances occasioned alarm, when I was desired to visit him—he was perfectly cured. —

A child, aged about twelve months, about the ninth, began gradually to decline in health, and to waste away, which were apprehended to proceed from the mother's milk disagreeing, together with the confined air of London; in consequence, it was removed into the country, where, for a few weeks, it visibly improved; afterwards, however, he became universally anasarious, with paucity of urine; I was then desired to visit it—and he was perfectly cured.

Mr. M. aged about *sixty-five*, a very irregular man, had been several years subject to gout; and in the winter of 1779, was attacked with severe cholic, and constipation of his bowels, these were succeeded by Ascites and Anasarca; but being very obstinate, could not be prevailed on to take medicines to relieve the Hydropic complaints, from the idea of their being Gout; however, when he became so exceedingly oppressed from accumulation, as to be rendered totally unable to rest in any other posture than almost with his body erect, or of moving his lower extremities, he consented to be tapped; by which, nearly four gallons of water were evacuated; he was now as anxious to take medicines as he had formerly been averse to them—and was perfectly cured.

Mr. G. aged *fifty-four*, of a gouty bilious habit; after having been afflicted with

Dropfy feveral years, and four times tapped within nine months—was perfectly cured. An Extract of whose Letter I fhall fubjoin; which was wrote nine months after his recovery.

DEAR SIR,

May 18, 1794.

I blefs God I continue well; and hope, by a little care as to diet and exercife, to continue fo; I am fifty-four years of age; I had for feven years ago, fwelled legs about the ankles, and under the calves, and very fhort breath, which I thought was owing to corpulency; but, in November 1791, after a flight touch of the Gout for a few days, it left me, and the fwellings feemed to be getting to my thighs; (indeed, fix months before, I confulted a Phyfician, who gave me a few dofes of purgatives, and advifed me to have my legs fwathed with woollen bandages, which I wore, but found of no fervice). I was then taken with violent fpafms in my cheft, and was

in this misery five or six weeks, and every one expected every day would be my last, and I was wasted very much; when it gradually went off, and the Dropsy, and swellings in my thighs and belly, as rapidly came on; after encreasing my sufferings by numberless medicines, &c. I was, in August following, 1792, so swelled, that I could scarce rise from my chair; when I was tapped, and had sixteen pints of water drawn off. In February following, I was tapped again, and had fourteen pints drawn off. And from the 2d of May to the 17th, I was tapped twice more. And when I applied to you, about six weeks after, I was as large as ever, both in my legs and belly, but I dreaded being tapped again. I shall not only be happy to give every information in my power to any cases that you refer from any of your patients, or others, you please to direct to me; but would go an hundred miles to have an interview with any of your recommendations.

Mrs. C. aged upwards of *thirty*, had long been affected with Ascites and Anasarca, the consequence of the right Ovary being so enlarged, with almost scirrhus induration, as to occupy nearly one half of the cavity of the belly; she had ineffectually taken medicines by the advice of several physicians, for the Dropsy; and was, by several persons of respectability, recommended to my care; at this time, she was so exceedingly emaciated, and so extremely weak, that I was apprehensive she would not have strength sufficient to bear even the mildest effects of medicines, or to support the loss of the fluid (which appeared to be very considerable) by tapping; but as I met with a very candid, intelligent practitioner, whose Patient she was, we very cautiously drew off fifteen quarts of water, after which she strictly adhered to regimen and medicines, by which the Anasarca totally disappeared, and no accumulation recur-

red; I visited her repeatedly, during eight months after the operation; and after an interval of four months, having a call into that neighbourhood, I saw her, when she continued free from any dropfical symptoms, but she died a few months after, from the pressure of this immense tumour, which could be sensibly felt to extend within one inch of the stomach, and from the painful sensations she felt, almost immediately after taking solid food, it appeared, that the stomach pressed on it; for whenever she lay in an horizontal posture, some time after eating, this sensation ceased.

Mrs. B. aged thirty, the mother of several children, had been sometime subject to dropfical complaints, attended with pretty severe pains in the left hypogastrium, previous to my assistance being requested; during which period, she had taken medicines by the advice of several

physicians, and consulted a surgeon of considerable eminence, who all concurred in opinion, that it was Dropsy of the Ovary, and therefore considered, and pronounced by them as incurable; she had likewise a considerable Anasarca appearance of the face, and extremities of the left side, loss of appetite, thirst, &c. but as her letter will afford the most unequivocal proof of recovery, I shall subjoin it.

SIR,

October 2, 1794.

Being convinced it will give you great pleasure to hear from *myself*, that I am, in every respect, perfectly recovered; I was determined not to write, till I could, with truth say so, which thank God I can; being able to walk six miles a day, without feeling any inconvenience from the exercise; and am in every respect, in a perfect good state of health.

A young lady, upwards of *twenty*, having consulted several physicians, and taken various medicines ineffectually; her case was pronounced, not only by them, but by a gentleman of considerable eminence, both as a surgeon and anatomist, to be Dropsy of the Ovarium, and as such, deemed incurable; under these circumstances, I was desired to visit her; when I found such a considerable uniform accumulation, as to resemble the Ascites; however, from every concurring circumstance of her case, I was convinced of its being as had been described; I therefore immediately proposed the operation of tapping; and drew off fifteen beer quarts of water; after which she steadily persevered in the method and medicines recommended, without having had the least relapse, which the following extract from her letter, near six months after will serve to confirm.

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SIR, June 1, 1796

I am happy to say I continue well, yet must trouble you, by making some enquiries, with respect to the continuance of the same diet, &c.

Mrs. F—, a married woman, aged *seventy-three*, Ascites, and Anasarca, accompanied with great difficulty and shortness of breathing, dry cough, darting pains through the chest, and pains in the arms, thirst, loss of appetite, &c. was perfectly cured; about two months after these complaints were removed, she was attacked with fever, which terminated in a mortification, and notwithstanding confinement in bed four weeks, not the least dropical symptoms ever recurred.

Mrs. S—, aged about *fifty-eight*, a single woman, had a long time felt a swelling in the left side (the situation of the Ova-

rium), attended with soreness and slight pains, to which she paid very little attention for some years from the trifling inconvenience they occasioned; however, when her general health became affected, and Anasarcous swellings of the extremity of that side appeared, she became alarmed, and had recourse to medical aid, which now and then removed the Anasarcous appearances, but as they returned, and the affection in the Ovarium very sensibly increased; she applied to me, and was perfectly cured.

Mrs. W. aged about *forty*, married, but never was pregnant; Dropsy of the right ovarium; had exactly similar complaints with the case of the preceding patient, though the medicines *she had taken* by the advice of several Physicians, had never produced the effects of removing the anasarcous appearances; and, therefore, un-

der almost the unfavourable impression of her case being incurable, she applied for my assistance—and was perfectly cured; which the annexed Letter will, I presume, sufficiently authenticate; not having heard from the patient since, but from an acquaintance some months after, that she remained perfectly well.

SIR,

August 14, 1795.

I conclude you expected to hear from me before now, which is the occasion of my writing at this time, to inform you of my proceedings; also, that my health is, I hope, re-established. I acquainted you in my last, how much better I was. I did not open your medicines when they arrived, nor in a week after; and I then found myself perfectly well, and have been ever since, except a day or two, when I felt a fullness, and uneasiness, which I attribute to deviating from my usual mode of living. If I continue well a few weeks

longer, I shall hope my complaint is gone off.

Mrs. F—, a single woman, aged about *fifty six*, Dropsy of the right Ovarium, accompanied with universal Anasarca, great weakness, loss of appetite, &c. she had consulted several of the faculty, and having taken various medicines ineffectually, they pronounced it to be an Ovarium case, and therefore informed her that no medicines would be of service: under this unfavourable idea, she was recommended by a female acquaintance to my care, and was perfectly cured.

Mrs. A. aged about *sixty*, had long been afflicted with cough, difficulty and shortness of breathing; darting pains through the chest, and pains in the arms, thirst, loss of appetite, and great weakness, accompanied likewise with Anasar-

ca, and very large scorbutic livid marks, resembling bruises; and universal eruptions, with incessant itchings, which, together with the laborious breathing, almost totally deprived her of sleep; after having taken medicines ineffectually, was advised to have my opinion, and—was perfectly cured.

A poor married woman, aged about *thirty-five*, of a remarkably spare habit, in consequence of having been exposed to a severe winter night, was attacked with inflammation of the lungs, which was succeeded by Ascites and Anasarca, attended with dry cough, great difficulty and shortness of breathing; the anasarcaous effusion was so considerable, that neither the eyes nor mouth could be distinguished, except by small indentations; and the body, in consequence of the accumulation in the belly, was so distended, that every spec-

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tator concluded she would burst—she was perfectly cured—without being tapped.

FINIS.



